

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Idea of History: Revised Edition, with Lectures, 1926—1928* by R. G. Collingwood and Jan van der Dussen

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# Reviews and Short Notices

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## General

***The Idea of History: Revised Edition, with Lectures, 1926–1928.* By R. G. Collingwood. Edited with an Introduction by Jan van der Dussen. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1993. liii + 510pp. £40.00.**

While Britain's overall contribution to the international literature on the philosophy of history has been modest, this work by Collingwood within the 'idealist' tradition has certainly attained the status of a classic. It first appeared in 1946, three years after its author's death, as a compilation made by his pupil T. M. Knox largely on the basis of hitherto unpublished manuscript materials. All of the resulting text, amounting to 334 printed pages, stands unaltered in this 1993 edition. Yet the latter does incorporate other features of a significantly distinctive kind. Above all, it offers another 160 pages derived from papers of Collingwood which have only recently become available in the Bodleian Library. Three interrelated items are involved, all dating from a relatively early phase of his thinking: 'The Idea of a Philosophy of Something, and, in particular, a Philosophy of History' (1927), 'Lectures on the Philosophy of History' (1926) and 'Outlines of a Philosophy of History' (1928). It should be further noted that Knox's original preface has now been replaced by a much fuller introductory essay from Professor van der Dussen. This not only raises some delicate questions, but also supplies some incisively critical answers, concerning the 'liberties' which the earlier editor took with the materials at his disposal. Van der Dussen cites the fresh manuscript evidence, together with his own previous work (especially *History as a Science*, 1981) and other recent commentaries, in order to challenge the 'rather idiosyncratic' opinions about Collingwood's intellectual development which Knox almost succeeded in making canonical. The new editor also astutely analyses certain changes of fashion in the reception accorded to the author's historico-philosophical contentions. At the end of the volume we find further evidence of improved editorial labour, in the form of an index now recast into a far subtler tool than that previously provided. Assessed overall, this enlarged version of *The Idea of History* is clearly the one which every institutional history library will wish to get promptly onto its shelves. Meanwhile, prospective individual purchasers will doubtless be hoping for its early issue in paperback at an altogether more affordable price.

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